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AUTHOR Joseph, Pamela B.; Efron, Sara
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ABSTRACT

Veteran teachers of various ages and levels of experience responded to questionnaires and interviews designed to reveal their perceptions in five thematic areas drawn from historical and contemporary research about teachers as moral agents. These areas are: (1) teachers' characterization of their personal values; (2) their understanding of their duties as moral agents; (3) their ideas about the private and public expectation of teachers as moral agents; (4) their sense of value compatibility with people in their schools and communities; and (5) their perceptions of their freedom to express values and beliefs. Two types of data collection were used: questionnaires and interviews. The values teachers affirmed and their perceptions of their values are revealed, largely through the use of direct quotations. A final section lists numerous questions raised by the study and discusses study implications. Four tables are included. (23 references) (CLA)

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MORAL CHOICES/MORAL CONFLICTS:

SELF-PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOLTEACHERS

Pamela B. Joseph

Sara Efron

National-Louis University

Interdisciplinary Studies Department

2840 Sheridan Road

Evanston, IL 60201

Office: 708-475-1100 #2131

Home: 708-328-2661

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Abstract

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Pamela B. Joseph

Sara Efron

National-Louis University

This study examines perceptions of schoolteachers in response to various hypotheses generated in historical and contemporary research about teachers as moral agents in five thematic areas: (1) teachers characterization of their personal values, (2) their understanding of their duties as moral agents, (3) their ideas about the private and public expectation of teachers as moral agents, (4) their sense of value compatibility with people in their schools and communities, and (5) their perception of their freedom to express values and beliefs. Also it reveals teachers' perceptions of their actual teaching experiences which involved moral values. Two types of data collection were used: questionnaires and interviews. The participants were veteran teachers of various ages and years of teaching from different types of schools and communities. The research suggests this population's belief that teachers should function as moral agents, but it discloses conflicting views about how teachers think they should function as moral agents. It also demonstrates the complexity of teachers' choices and experiences. The research was conducted in order to elicit schoolteachers' perceptions of the moral experiences of schooling--their reflections about the moral decisions that they made and the conflicts that they recognized.

MORAL CHOICES/MORAL CONFLICTS:
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National-Louis University

Contemporary and historical research indicates that teaching is a moral enterprise (Fenstermacher, 1990; Stewart, 1974; Strike, 1990; Sugarman, 1973; Thomas, 1990; Tom, 1984) and that teachers themselves may see many of their own decisions and actions, including their decisions to become teachers, as having moral outcomes (Blase, 1983; Kohl, 1984; Lortie, 1975). However, what appears to be common lore in the literature of teacher education is fraught with perplexing issues, in particular, consideration of how involvement in the moral fabric of schooling affects teachers personally and professionally.

Several hypotheses generated by researchers writing about moral values and about the moral overtones of schoolteaching during the twentieth century suggest that the experiences of holding and teaching values are complex when one considers teachers as individuals and as professionals.

First, as people develop their individual moralities, the process is not automatic, superficial, or necessarily totally conscious. For example, Hall (1973) reveals that individuals will have very strong feelings about what is right and wrong because of their strong memories and feelings of their cultures' or families' teaching and therefore they experience great discomfort when their moral sensibilities are violated (pp. 74-75). Furthermore, Myrdal notes that "the moral struggles goes on within people not only between them... [that] behind human behavior there are a mesh of struggling inclinations, interest, and ideas....(1968, p.88). Despite the popular call for teachers to be moral role models and moral educators (images that suggest that teachers clearly must know what they are doing--how to behave and what values to teach), it is foolish to imagine that teachers do not experience the same quandaries and emotional responses as other human beings as they grapple with value issues and face others who violate their deeply felt beliefs. The experiencing of unconscious value dilemmas affects how teachers feel about

themselves and their students (Berlak & Berlak, 1981; Lampert, 1985; Lyons, 1990).

Second, the process of holding and living according to one's moral values is particularly intricate when one considers teachers as moral agents. Historically, sociologists suggest that teachers must not communicate their own values but uphold and teach the values of the communities in which they teach (Beale, 1936; Elsbree, 1939; Lortie, 1975; Waller, 1932). Also, teachers are made to feel that they are held on moral pedestals on which their beliefs and actions are scrutinized (Lortie, 1975; Waller, 1932). Whereas for many teachers, their moral values may be quite compatible with those held by community members, some teachers struggle with moral conflict in their classrooms and their discomfort interferes with their effectiveness (Blase, 1983; Brubaker, 1970; Jersild, 1955; Joseph, 1977). As Thomas (1990) observes, "schools are sources of moral instruction and sites of moral struggle" (p. 267).

The study evolved from the researchers' interest in examining perceptions of contemporary school teachers in response to these various hypotheses about teachers as moral agents that primarily have been derived from sociological studies of teaching. Furthermore, as Lampert (1985) and Lyons (1990) suggest, there is a lack of good description about how teachers see their moral mission and there is a need for teachers and teacher educators to understand the practitioner's point of view. This research attempts to explain how teachers perceive their actual experiences involving moral values in their classrooms, schools, and communities and to share their reflections about how they see themselves as moral agents.

The Study

Between January and April of 1990, one of the two researchers met with small groups of teachers (approximately 15 people in each group) who were enrolled in a two-year teacher renewal program (leading to an M.Ed. in curriculum and instruction). The researcher became a resource instructor for

a four-hour class and, depending upon the term of study, conducted seminars either on the subject of moral values and schooling (educational foundations) or moral development (human development).

In both types of classes, the researcher first asked the participants to write individually to define their meaning of "values" and "moral values." This writing and discussion had several purposes: The researchers felt that it made sense for students to grapple with such questions before they filled out questionnaires that would ask questions about moral values and conflicts. Also, during the classes taught before the research formally began, it was found that some students had unusual ways to differentiate values and moral values, e.g. for a few, moral values had sexual connotations, e.g. behavior and language. It was hoped that through discussion, students would have a similar understanding about the meaning of these words. By sharing their writing, the participants reached consensus about a definition of moral values. In the various groups who participated in the research, it generally was agreed that moral values should be defined as guidelines for behavior in which moral choices are not preferences but are definite rules for right and wrong (in contrast to other kinds of values which one may not agree with but can tolerate and respect that other people hold them).

After discussion about the meaning of the term, moral value, each of the 180 participants filled out a 30-item questionnaire. The questionnaire incorporated five thematic areas about teachers' concepts about their dealings with moral values in nonspecific incidents: (1) their understanding of whether or not their moral values are in the process of development or whether they believe their values have been formed, (2) their understanding of their duties as moral agents, (3) their ideas about the private and public expectations of teachers as moral agents, (4) their sense of value compatibility with people in their schools and communities, and (5) their perception of their freedom to express their values and beliefs in their schools and communities. In addition, some participants took advantage of the space left for writing following the questionnaire in order to elaborate their

response to one or more items. The teachers also gave demographic information about themselves and their perceptions of the communities in which they teach. The population includes teachers (except for a few exceptions, all working in public schools) of various age groups, teaching experiences, and types of communities.

[Table 1]

The results of the questionnaires were tabulated by the percentages of the total population and a chi-square test was applied to several of the questionnaire responses in order to see if there were significant differences among respondents by sub-groups (e.g. age, type of community, gender).

From April to June of 1990, the second researcher interviewed 26 teachers who filled out the questionnaire. The participants in the interviews were chosen in order to represent a cross-section of teachers representing female and male respondents, various ages and types of communities, and teaching experience.

[Table 2]

The researcher also attempted to interview the teachers who demonstrated their interest in the subject of moral values and teaching and their ability to verbalize their experiences as demonstrated by their writing following the questionnaires. However, because of the time and geographical constraints, a majority of the interview participants had written on the questionnaires but not all had done so.

The research objectives were: to disclose, through the use of narrative, specific situations in which teachers have made what they believe to be moral choices or in which they experienced conflict over moral issues involving teaching. Using Tappan and Brown's (1989) "Moral Conflict and Choice Interview" as a basis for examining teachers "lived experience of moral decision-making and moral action" (p. 183), the researchers wished to explore both cognitive and affective ramifications of teachers' choices and conflicts. Also, it was hoped that the teachers would be able to characterize how they carry out their responsibilities as value educators. Interview questions were

formulated in order to attempt to accomplish these objectives:

1. Do you see yourself as a value educator?
2. What are the values that you feel are the most important to teach students?
3. Can you give an example of when you were a value educator?
4. Can you describe a situation in your classroom in which you experienced a moral conflict and had to make a decision? What did you do? Why?
5. Have you ever had a moral conflict with students' parents?
6. Have you ever had a moral conflict with administrators?
7 Have you ever had a moral conflict with colleagues?
8. Are your values shared by the community?
9. How do your values affect your teaching?
10. If a controversial issue is raised, do you give students your opinion?

Data analysis of the interviews was carried out in several ways. First, the researchers studied the questionnaires of those who were interviewed--noting individual answers and comparing their responses as a group [26] to the larger population [180]. Second, the responses to the specific interview questions were read in order to find out majority and minority categories of answers. Third, the responses were coded in order to investigate issues and themes that appeared without being overt responses to particular questions or that actually answered previous questions. These codes developed from the reading of the interviewee's answers rather than being predetermined. Included in these themes or issues were:

1. specific values that interviewees believed they should teach their students
2. religion--personal beliefs or as a classroom issue

3. issues that provoked conflict between these teachers and others
4. discussion of how did the interviewees deal with conflict
5. emotions involved in being value educators or experiencing moral conflict
6. personal growth or change during the years they have been teachers
7. awareness (the interviewee's or the researcher's) of inconsistencies within the interview (e.g. the reluctance to directly teach values and recognition that there are values that they believe they should teach)

Questionnaire Findings

Overwhelmingly, the participants affirm Jackson's (1986) description of transformative teaching:

> Teachers working within the transformative tradition are actually trying to bring about changes in their students (and possibly in themselves as well) that make them better persons, not simply more knowledgeable or skillful, but better in the sense of being closer to what humans are capable of becoming--more virtuous, fuller participants in an evolving moral order (p. 127).

Nearly all teachers surveyed responded positively to this statement, "I hope that I can have a lasting effect on the students whom I teach, not just by making them better students, but by making them better people."

These schoolteachers also demonstrated strong agreement in their answers to several other questions about value compatibility with colleagues and administrators and about the high moral standards required of teachers. They mainly disagreed with with the statement that teachers should in no way--direct teaching or role-modeling--be value educators.

But few questionnaire responses generated other such impressive accord. The questionnaires show that these teachers do not uniformly share perceptions about the development of their own belief systems, their understanding of how to carry out moral responsibilities of teaching, moral expectations of schoolteachers, value compatibility with their communities, and their sense of freedom to be value educators. Furthermore, except for very few instances (and those were not strikingly noticeable), differences among responses based on gender, location, age or years of teaching, and type of school did not occur.

[Table 3]

Summaries of the five thematic areas are as follows:

1. The questionnaires demonstrate that not all teachers are sure of their personal value systems and nearly one-half of the respondents believe that their personal values are still in a state of development. A majority believe that since they have become teachers, they have become more caring and altruistic.

2. Although the teachers in this study strongly advocate their involvement as moral agents, more favor indirect role modeling to direct teaching of values. However, only approximately one-half of the teachers would advocate encouraging their students to think about and challenge the prevailing values of their communities.

3. This population of teachers feels fairly strongly (81%) that teachers should demonstrate high moral standards in their professional lives, and to a lesser extent (70%), in their personal lives. There were mixed responses to the notions that teachers are or should be more moral than people in other professions. Also, a majority (68%) believe that administrators' perceptions of their own values affected their hiring in their district but fewer teachers (31%) think that administrators' perceptions of their moral values affected the decision for their tenure.

4. Do these teachers think that their values are similar to the values held by colleagues, administrators, students, parents, and other community

members? Slightly more than one-half of the respondents affirm value compatibility with community members and slightly less than one-half of this population believe that they have similar values as their students or parents of students. Suburban teachers feel that their values are more similar to their schools' communities than do small town and urban teachers. For all groups of teachers, there seems to be a fairly high compatibility with administrators and colleagues (approximately 70% and 80%). Nearly three-quarters believe that their administrators encourage them to be altruistic role models.

5. Slightly more than three-quarters of the teachers feel free to express their values in the classroom, with administrators, parents, and community members. Men (the majority of whom are junior high and high school teachers) feel less free to express their values in the classroom than do their women colleagues. However, there were no significant differences between men and women in their responses to statements about their freedom to express their values and beliefs to administrators, parents, and people in the community.

Interview Findings

The population of teachers interviewed mirrored the larger population of all teachers who only answered the questionnaire. As did their colleagues, the interview participants demonstrated mixed responses in most areas except their overriding desire to make students "better people." And, as did their colleagues, they had reservations about direct value teaching, preferring role-modeling as their means of being moral agents.

[Table 4]

The interviews reveal that the teachers know that in some way they must be value educators, but have varied sense of their ethical responsibilities and comprehension of how to accomplish their goals. The interviews also

manifest the value conflicts with parents and administrators that teachers experience, suggesting that many aspects of schooling are fraught with teachers' concerns which they perceive as moral conflicts.

The majority of the 26 teachers portray their role as value educators in an indirect way, primarily as role models.

> Yes, I believe that teachers are value educators. I feel that through our teaching we teach values without specifically coming out and saying that we teach values...through my teaching in the classroom, through my interaction with my students and between students, they are learning values. (F,26, Junior High, Suburban)

> Yes, more by example than by actual content teaching. I think that I set an example for students in the way that I treat them. For example, all my students know that I am honest, that I always tell the truth. If I borrow something I expect that they will return it. They know that I don't care what color they are. I am a role model. (F, 53, Junior High, Suburban)

These schoolteachers are aware that much of the interaction with students has value-laden content, even if they are not directly teaching values in subject matter.

> Well, I suppose so, not that I teach values. I mean when you teach addition, there are no values that come up, but in social studies maybe, or when I talk with the kids at recess or just talk. Then I sometimes say things that I guess are value-oriented. The kids tell

me about drinking or smoking and I tell them, "You are just ten-years-old. Don't do that. Drinking is bad for you." (M, 41, Elementary, Urban).

Yes, I teach values, but I don't do it overtly. It is more the way you handle situations as they come up. If a kid has a problem with another kid...I look at it as a value problem. By working things out, helping them overcome it, I teach values. (M, 41, Elementary, Small Town).

Some of the teachers believe that the moral values that they accept as part of their religious training or childhood teachings influence their approach to teaching.

I think all of us are teaching values in one way or another. We can't hide that. What we grow up with, what we were taught as children will come back into the classroom. We have to temper that. One reason is because the board says, "Don't talk about religion in the classroom." But the way you carry yourself reflects if you are religious or if you are not...how you control your temper...do you show a caring feeling toward the children? (F, 40, Elementary, Urban)

I am a Christian and I practice Christianity. I believe that I know what is right and what is wrong. I try very hard not necessarily to instill the Christian values, but to instill the ideas of truthfulness, non-prejudicial attitudes, and so on. (F, 29, Elementary, Suburban)

> Sometimes I find it very difficult not to go across the line to propagandizing almost. For example it is very offensive to me for a child to use the Lord's name in vain. I, without thinking, have said, "unless we are praying, let's not talk to God." I am not supposed to do that. But I do. It is a part of me. (F, 44, Elementary, Small Town)

And yet, some of these teachers report how they try to uphold the public school's separation from religion when students bring in religious items or raise religious beliefs. Several recount how they teach the theory of creation and balance between the literal interpretation of the families' religions and their own acceptance of scientific theory.

> I find myself kind of nervous in a situation like that. I have my own values and I don't want to put them on somebody else. But I do in a way, because they are good values. It is difficult. You kind of walk on a fine line. (M, 32, Elementary, Small Town)

Another incident reveals the tension and humorous irony when a teacher tries to respect the children, their families, and yet keep the classroom secular:

> Children will bring Sunday school things to school. They will bring things about Jesus. Even though I believe in Jesus, I can't deal with that. Because in school there is separation between church and state, but I don't want to shut the child off either. You can't say to the child, this isn't good, because it is important to the child. [She relates an incident in which a kindergartner brings in a Bible story book.]

> We just looked at the pictures. I told them I didn't have enough time to read the stories. I don't know what else I could have done. I couldn't say, "Oh, that's Sunday school stuff; we don't do Sunday school stuff on Monday. That does not make sense to five-year-olds. To them, it is just a book. But if a parent walks in, or God forbid, the principal, I could have been in a lot of trouble. (F, 44, Elementary, Urban)

Several interviews disclose that value education takes place by directly attempting to teach certain behaviors.

> Definitely, I am a role model and the way I teach kids manners. The way I encourage the kids to interact with each other. We have done a lot of cooperative learning situations. I try to get kids to be in touch with their friends' feelings, and not just their friends but other kids, too. (M, 32, Elementary, Small Town)

> If someone breaks something in the room, we have to talk about it. If someone steals something, we talk about that. We talk about life, when we see a bug or spider in class. It happens. I don't plan it. It is a part of me. I value life. (F, 44, Elementary, Urban)

However, several teachers confide that it's very difficult being a role model because of the society in which their students live.

> The kids are different than the kids 25 years ago. My junior high kids see R rated movies all the time. They know every bad word in the book. Many words I

didn't know until I was married. Their overall outlook on morals is totally different from what I was brought up with. It is real hard sometimes to reason with kids that are operating on a different wave length. One of the kids said to me a couple of years ago, "Mrs. C, are you G-rated?" And I am. (F, 50, Junior High, Suburban)

I am finding that I kind of assumed that every child wants to learn and wants to go on. And they don't. Every year I have my children write this little thing: "When I grow up I...." I expected they would want to study, to travel. But they want a house, a car, a motorcycle. Materialistic things seem to be really important, and that is not a value that I share. (F, 42, Elementary, Small Town)

Often, the teachers explain how they avoid telling their personal values or if they do, make it very clear that they are giving their personal opinion, not "teaching" the value. But for a few teachers, it seems appropriate to directly teach values within subject matter.

I don't know if I consciously plan programs to teach values, but when I talk about literature and themes and character development, I am giving my feelings on what's happening, as I would with my own son and daughter, sharing my views with the hope that they will accept them, but not making it a personal crusade. (M, 44, High School, Rural)

I had a kid write me a poem, and he just brought it back when he was in junior high. He wrote: "Oh, how I

loved to watch you when you teach. How, how I hated it when you preached." And I know sometimes it is like that. (F, 42, Elementary, Suburban)

When I am in the classroom no matter what lesson you have, no matter what content was decided by the school board, by the curriculum director, or by the staff, whichever way I choose to teach it, I can teach a value. Whatever I believe to be important in the lesson, I emphasize. (M, 28, High School, Suburban)

The same teacher explains his rationale for direct value-teaching:

When I went into teaching, I didn't think a teacher should teach values. I thought that the teacher should be objective. Now that I have taught, I realize it is absurd. [I didn't think that a teacher should teach values because] it can be used in a very negative way. I can go into the classroom and teach values in a very distorted and negative way and get many students to follow me, to believe that what I teach is true and accurate. I could teach them anti-Christian beliefs. I can teach them to be against Jews. So, I thought a teacher should give both sides of the story and be objective. But now I realize that when I go into the classroom, I teach honesty and hard work. I teach fairness and I do that on a daily basis. (M, 28, High School, Suburb)

But despite the fact that only a minority of interviewees assumed they should directly teach values, <u>every one</u>,at some point in the interview, shared

with the researcher at least one value that he or she believed should be taught. In order of frequency, these are the values that these teachers affirmed:

1. respect for others, tolerance, fairness
2. honesty, also being honest with oneself
3. respect for oneself, self-esteem, self-confidence
4. responsibility, hard work, sense of accomplishment, pride in work
5. cooperation, getting along with people
6. respect for life, reverence for life
7. empathy, kindness
8. manners, being polite
9. loyalty
10. persistence, never giving up

Many of these schoolteachers think that parents share their values and support teachers, however, they also relate several episodes in which they believe that parents try to circumvent their attempts to teach standards of hard work and good behavior. The interviews, too, indicate that some teachers think that they must teach values because parents have become inadequate value educators. And yet, several of these teachers have concern about value inculcation because they do not want to show disrespect for the parents.

> The children I deal with now have parents that do not teach them values at all .... These children have a hard time distinguishing between right and wrong, children who don't know how to share. The only way they know how to solve a problem is "I am going to get you." So, yes, I am teaching them values. (F, 42, Elementary, Suburban)

This is a very competitive community. The parents push their children to the maximum. I don't think it's the way to raise children. (F, 26, Junior High, Suburban)

Some of the parents are pushing their kids too much. Some use their kids as pawns in cases of divorce. It is a disgrace. I do talk with the parents, but in a round-about way. We have to be careful. I have told parents that they have to be careful not to overload the children. (M, 30, Elementary, Suburban)

Sometimes a situation in class can catch you by surprise. One of the kids used a profane word. It first came to mind I should really punish the kid. Instead of immediately punishing him, I asked, "Where did you get this language from?" He said, "My mother and father use it at home." I said, "We don't use it in school. This is not home and you are all grown." I did not want to tell him what his mother and father should do or shouldn't do. (M, 37, Elementary, Urban)

Clearly, some of these teachers see themselves as their students' advocates as they embroil themselves in uncomfortable situations in order to do what they believe will help or protect children and adolescents.

I will cover for students when they are some place where they shouldn't be if they are honest with me and I know that they were not doing anything bad. I tell them, "If I lose my trust in you, we aren't going to have a good working relationship." (M, 44, High School, Rural)

It was a case of a ninth grader who is dating a senior. They were very close in the hall by the locker...touchy and huggy, really overboard. I kept thinking, I should call her mom and let her know, but I didn't. Then I got a call from the parent. In the middle of the call, I said, "I don't know if I should do that or not, but I think you should know, but you are the mom and this is what is going on in the hall. I didn't want to be a tattletale, but I don't want you to have problems with your daughter in the next year or two, and then regret that I didn't tell you." (F, 40, High School, Small Town)

Nevertheless, it does not always seem possible to be a student's protector.

A student came to me; she was crying. She was upset because her mother was living with someone. This person was mistreating her mother. I became the person in the middle and that was very difficult. I went to the principal and asked him how I should handle it. He recommended that I try to stay neutral as possible or recommend them all to go to the counselor. At that time, I wanted to tell the woman, "Leave the person that is hurting you." The mom didn't go to the counselor and the girl came to me and asked me to intervene, but I had to tell her that I can't. It was very hard for me to do. I did the right thing in the eyes of the board of education. I didn't do the right thing in my eyes. I saw what it was doing to the child. Do you do the right thing for the students or for yourself? (F, 40, Elementary, Urban)

Many of the interviewed schoolteachers also acknowledge their value compatibility with their administrators and explain how their decisions that reflect their attempt to be value educators are supported. But several teachers perceive that conflicts with administrators are not just differences of opinion, but are moral conflicts.

> I had a moral conflict with a principal. He wanted me to put in the report card something that would make the parents happy, but put in the cumulative record what the child actually earned. My signature was on there. I refused to do that. I had to protect myself. I would not behave in any other way. It resulted in my being transferred out of his school. (F, 45, Elementary, Urban)

> I think my principal definitely is a "con artist." I think he never tells the truth. He is just a lot of PR; he does his "dog and pony" show for people outside. I personally believe that the way he runs the school that the president of the KKK wouldn't do worse to our kids. I truly believe it. Nobody has enough nerve to get up and say, "Stop it, you are lying!" I am not sure I want to do that. (F, 36, High School, Urban)

> I don't have tenure. You won't see me in an argument with my administrator about values. Come back and ask me this question in three or four years. (M, 30, Elementary, Suburban)

The interviews poignantly tell of these teachers' desire to teach and

model values of honesty, loyalty, cooperation, respect for others and for oneself amidst conflicting messages and behaviors from parents, popular culture, and sometimes their administrators. Some teachers, however, have had little understanding of the value-orientation of their work and through the interview process they looked, perhaps for the first time, at their sense of ethical responsibilities in the way that they teach and interact with students. Also, these teachers know that ethical responsibilities must be considered in realistic contexts. They realize their own humanity and know that decisions about how to be value educators are not clear-cut or easy. As Lyons (1990) reminds us, many dilemmas of teaching cannot be resolved but merely managed (p. 168).

Implications

This study raises various questions about schoolteachers in American society that ought to be pursued by researchers in order to help beginning and veteran teachers understand the social, cultural, and political context in which they must educate students:

1. Why do some teachers see value compatibility with their teaching communities and others do not? In some communities are teachers viewed or perceive themselves as a different social class from that of the majority of community members? Is being a teacher a suspect role in some communities? For example, is the anti-materialism expressed by some of these teachers viewed as odd by the children or parents? Also, does a sense of value incompatibility affect how teachers will relate with children and parents? Or, does it put pressure on teachers to conform to community values?

2. Why do some teachers experience the perception that they do not have the freedom to express their values in the classroom? Is this more a problem for male teachers as this study tentatively suggests? And if that finding is substantiated, why should this phenomenon exist? Also, why are these teachers afraid of self-expression of values? Are their fears realistic? Even though a large majority of the total population of this study believe they have

freedom of expression, it should be of great concern that the minority viewpoint exists.

3. Why do only approximately one-half of the teachers in this study believe that it is their duty to encourage students to think about and challenge the prevailing values of the community? Is this because teachers are politically conservative or because they perceive threat if they try to encourage students to question community norms and practice? Have some of the assumptions made by sociologists more than 50 years ago (e.g. Beale, 1936; Waller, 1932) have relevance for our understanding of the teaching profession in America today?

Also, more probing ought to be done about teachers as moral agents and as moral actors in the context of classrooms and schools:

1. How are moral situations revealed by others than the teachers themselves? For example, how do students understand the teaching, role-modeling, or conflicts involving values? Or, what will we learn when an ethnographer enters the classroom and witnesses the incidents in which moral choice and conflict occur?

2. What issues are viewed as having moral overtones from the perspective of others within the school? Do administrators and others, e.g. special education teachers, see moral choice and conflict differently than does the classroom teacher? Can a discussion of conflict as deeply-felt moral choices allow for sharing of viewpoints and discussion for people working in schools?

The study also indicates various directions for teacher education:

1. Teacher educators cannot only teach about ethical responsibilities of teaching; rather, they must enter into dialogues with teachers and teaching candidates about the values and beliefs they bring to their vocation. Together they must discuss how values are ingrained because of the teachings of families and religions and how values may change as individuals gain experience. When young adults enter the profession, it is likely that value-systems are in the process of development and that the young teacher may

suffer greater confusion because of lack of experience. Teacher educators must help prospective teachers to imagine what issues and circumstances will cause them conflict and discomfort and to help them consider how they will deal with situations in which they will experience value conflict.

2. The social/cultural context in which teaching takes place must be examined. The situations that the teachers in the study found difficult or thought-provoking, such as dealing with religion in the classroom, should be shared with prospective teachers--not in order to easily name solutions, but to understand the difficulties in dealing with students, e.g. when the teacher perceives that parents or students do not share the teacher's values and may be displaying behaviors that teachers believe are hurtful. Hence, teachers need to examine their roles in the context of community expectations which make realization of ethical responsibilities not as simple as might be initially perceived by the new teacher.

3. Awareness that teachers must function in the moral realm primarily has generated discussion about the need to examine ethical obligations and the development of strategies to encourage teachers and teaching candidates to respond to hypothetical dilemmas depicting choices of action (Brubaker, 1970; Strike & Soltis, 1985). But the practice of responding to hypothetical dilemmas (in moral education as well as teacher education) is a strategy that, as Packer (1985) points out, "lacks immediacy" thus not revealing the emotions that enter into the moral situation (p. 3).

> An interpretative account of moral conflict...aims, ideally, to provoke us to reflection upon our experiences of conflict and our conduct on such occasions in such a way that we notice aspects of experience which were not apparent before....(Packer, 1985, p. 9).

It is hermeneutic study of moral conflict that encourages thought and

understanding that may enable teachers to more thoroughly grasp ethical dilemmas and reflect about what to do about them. How will we understand how schoolteachers make moral choices and feel moral conflict without asking them for their interpretations of their experiences?

In conclusion, it is necessary to characterize many of the decisions, actions, and conflicts experienced in schools as rightfully ethical in nature. Furthermore, there is a need to encourage reflection about actual experience when moral decisions are made and conflicts are experienced, to grasp the complexity of teachers' experiences as they live as moral agents.

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Table 1

Questionnaire Respondents [180]

GENDER:		RACE:		AGE:		YEARS TEACHING:	
Female	[152] 84.4%	Caucasian	[169] 93.9%	23-29	[25] 13.9%	1-4	[26] 14.4%
Male	[28] 15.6%	Afro-Am.	[11] 6.1%	30-39	[48] 26.7%	5-9	[38] 21.1%
				40-49	[92] 51.1%	10-14	[40] 22.2%
				50-59	[15] 8.3%	14-19	[51] 28.3%
						20-25	[16] 8.9%
						25+	[9] 5.0%

SCHOOL TYPE:		SCHOOL'S COMMUNITY:		LIVE THERE:	
Elementary	[108] 60.0%	Urban	[28] 15.6%	Yes	[80] 44.4%
Junior High	[39] 21.7%	Suburban	[105] 58.3%	No	[100] 55.6%
High School	[29] 16.1%	Small Town	[42] 23.3%		
Mix	[4] 2.2%	Rural	[5] 2.8%		

SOCIAL-ECONOMIC LEVEL OF SCHOOL COMMUNITY	
Affluent	[16] 8.9%
Affluent/Middle Class	[31] 17.2%
Middle Class	[34] 18.9%
Middle Class/Lower-Middle	[33] 18.3%
Lower-Middle Class	[12] 6.7%
Lower-Middle/Poor	[16] 8.9%
Poor	[2] 1.1%
Mix	[36] 20.0%

PERCEIVED COMPATIBILITY WITH SCHOOL COMMUNITY	
Similar	[82] 45.6%
Different*	[118] 54.4%

*Differences:

Social-Economic

Ethnicity/Race

Education Levels or Values

Religion

Size of Community

Table 2

Interview Participants [26]

GENDER:		RACE:		AGE:		YEARS TEACHING:	
Female	[16] 61.5%	Caucasian	[23] 88.5%	23-29	[5] 19.2%	1-4	[4] 15.4%
Male	[10] 38.5%	Afro-Am.	[3] 11.5%	30-39	[6] 23.2%	5-9	[4] 15.4%
				40-49	[13] 50.0%	10-14	[7] 26.9%
				50-59	[2] 7.7%	14-19	[10] 38.5%
						20-25	[1] 3.8%
						25+	[0] 0.0%

SCHOOL TYPE:		SCHOOL'S COMMUNITY:		LIVE THERE:	
Elementary	[17] 65.4%	Urban	[6] 23.1%	Yes	[16] 61.5%
Junior High	[3] 11.5%	Suburban	[13] 50.0%	No	[10] 38.5%
High School	[6] 23.1%	Small Town	[6] 23.3%		
Mix	[0] 0.0%	Rural	[1] 3.8%		

SOCIAL-ECONOMIC LEVEL OF SCHOOL COMMUNITY	
Affluent	[1] 3.8%
Affluent/Middle Class	[4] 15.4%
Middle Class	[4] 15.4%
Middle Class/Lower-Middle	[7] 26.9%
Lower-Middle Class	[0] 0.0%
Lower-Middle/Poor	[4] 15.4%
Poor	[1] 3.8%
Mix	[5] 19.2%

PERCEIVED COMPATIBILITY WITH SCHOOL COMMUNITY	
Similar	[12] 46.2%
Different*	[14] 53.8%

*Differences:

Social-Economic

Ethnicity/Race

Education Levels or Values

Religion

Size of Community

Table 3

QUESTIONNAIRE: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ROLES AS MORAL AGENTS

[180]

	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
Hope to make students better people not just better students:	95%	3%	2%
Teachers should not demonstrate nor teach their values:	18%	74%	8%
Duty to serve as moral role model but not teach personal values:	66%	31%	3%
Duty to demonstrate and teach personal values:	39%	45%	16%
Students need me to model better values than families' values:	49%	30%	21%
Personal values basically are same as people's in school's community: *	56%	28%	16%
Feeling of freedom to express values and beliefs in classroom: **	77%	16%	7%
Teachers usually are more moral than people in other occupations:	32%	43%	25%

(Table 3 cont')

* Results of Chi-Square analysis demonstrates that suburban teachers experience more value compatibility with their communities than do urban and small town teachers. (There is an extremely small sampling of rural teachers.)

	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
Suburban	65%	19%	16%
Small Town	50%	43%	7%
Urban	36%	39%	25%
Rural	60%	20%	20%

** Results of Chi-Square analysis demonstrated that male teachers perceive less freedom to express values and beliefs in the classroom than do their female colleagues.

	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
Females	79%	13%	8%
Males	64%	32%	4%

Table 4

QUESTIONNAIRE: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ROLES AS MORAL AGENTS

Interview Respondents [26]

	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
Hope to make students better people not just better students:	96%	4%	0%
Teachers should not demonstrate nor teach their values:	23%	69%	8%
Duty to serve as moral role model but not teach personal values:	61%	35%	4%
Duty to demonstrate and teach personal values:	38%	50%	12%
Students need me to model better values than families' values:	61%	27%	12%
Personal values basically are same as people's in school's community:	50%	27%	23%
Feeling of freedom to express values and beliefs in classrooms:	73%	19%	8%
Teachers usually are more moral than people in other occupations:	31%	38%	31%